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FM AMEMBASSY ASMARA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8604
INFO RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 6032
RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI 2911
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0201
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1270
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4681
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1449
RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA 1751
RUEPADJ/CJTF-HOA J2X CAMP LEMONIER DJ
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 001051

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/19/2016

TAGS: PREL PINR IR ER

SUBJECT: ERITREA AND IRAN DISCUSS DIPLOMATIC TIES

Classified By: AMB. Scott H. DeLisi for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) The Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) recently announced that it had sent an envoy to Iran to establish formal diplomatic relations and economic ties with Iran. In a December 15 Reuters report, Andeab Meskel, head of the Afro-Asia-Pacific desk at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied that any anti-western agenda was behind the move. Poloff spoke with Abraham Yohannes of the MFA Americas Division on December 18. Yohannes told Poloff that "the current situation facing Eritrea" had pushed Eritrea toward Iran and that this move was to be expected. Yohannes refused to offer more specifics; however, he did say that the GSE had not decided yet whether Eritrea would establish a separate embassy in Tehran or extend another ambassador's credentials to include Iran.

¶2. (C) Comment: Earlier this year the MFA was still voicing concern about Iran and its radical Islamist views and officials of the GSE maintained that they shared international concerns about Iran's nuclear ambitions. Eritrea's foreign policy agenda has continued to shift in recent months, however, and few observers here are surprised now to see Eritrea reaching out to Iran - especially given Eritrea's efforts within the past year to establish relationships with countries often critical of the U.S. In seeking to heal relationships with Libya and Sudan, as well as supporting the Council of Islamic Courts in Somalia and reaching out to Venezuela at the UNGA meeting in October, Eritrea continues its strategy of moving away from the western countries. End Comment.

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